



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release January 29, 1982

Megan Durham 202/343-5634

LEOPARD IN SOUTHERN AFRICA RECLASSIFIED TO "THREATENED" SPECIES

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reclassified the leopard from "endangered species" status to the less grave category of "threatened species" in southern Africa, director Robert A. Jantzen announced today.

"Studies of the leopard by four wildlife experts and information we have received from African nations indicate that the leopard is not in danger of extinction in southern Africa," Jantzen said. "Biologically, it is more accurate to recognize the leopard as 'threatened' than as 'endangered' in this region, and that is why we are making this change."

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, "endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means that a species may become endangered in the foreseeable future. The reclassification was proposed in the March 24, 1980, Federal Register.

Jantzen emphasized, however, that commercial trade in leopard parts and products, such as hides and fur coats, continues to be strictly prohibited.

The decision, which followed more than 18 months of public review and comment, will allow American sport hunters to import leopard trophies legally taken in the region where the leopard is now listed as "threatened." Many wildlife authorities believe that allowing importation of legally taken leopard trophies will encourage conservation of the leopard because sport hunting provides jobs and income for Africans. Presently the leopard has no monetary value and is indiscriminately killed as vermin in many areas, particularly where it preys on livestock.

The reclassification, which was published in the January 28, 1982, Federal Register, is more restrictive than the 1980 proposal, which would have changed the leopard to "threatened" status throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Because some African countries said they consider the leopard to be in danger of extinction in northern and western parts of this region, the leopard will now be listed as "threatened" only in the southern African nations of Gabon, Congo, Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland. It remains listed as "endangered" elsewhere in Africa, and throughout the rest of its range in Asia.

(over)

The reclassification of the leopard under the Endangered Species Act does not change the species' listing on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), a multi-national treaty whose purpose is to control exploitation of endangered species from commercial trade. American hunters will therefore need to obtain a CITES import permit for their leopard trophies from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as an export permit from the country of origin or a reexport permit from any intervening country. No import permit will be issued unless the trophy is legal and the Service determines that the country where the leopard was taken has a management program for the species and can show that its populations can sustain a sport hunting harvest.

X X X